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The situation of the industrial workman in Poland

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The change of the structure of society.

The decisions of the Jalta and Potsdam conferences concerning the Polish frontiers, removal of the prevalently agricultural eastern territories and annexation of the western regions with great, although devastated industrial area of the Lower Silesia, enlarging of the sea frontier - all this considerably influenced the structure of society in Poland. The realisation of the Three Years Plan of the industrial reconstruction and two years of the Six Years Plan only deepened these structural changes. Primarily, there was constructed especially the heavy industry for the sake of the increase of the Russian military potential; this heavy industry absorbed great quantity of the ^{SURPLUS} "pauperized population of the villages". According to the data of the census on December 3, 1950, 54,25 per cent of the population was occupied by work other than agriculture, and only ^{45.75} 45,25 per cent's source of livelihood was agriculture. During the year 1951 and the first months of 1952, this number of people working in occupations other than agriculture undoubtedly increased. According to the "Przeglad Zwiaskowy" No 2 (from February 1952) the number of persons occupied elsewhere than agriculture at the beginning of 1951 was 5,500,000. These phenomena, as well as the change of the conditions in agricultur

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in Poland, hardly removed the problem of the "poors" in the villages. On the other hand, the unemployment in the towns undoubtedly entirely disappeared, and there appeared a contrary phenomenon, namely the shortage of workmen, especially of specialists for the qualified works.

Schooling in the enterprises

This compelled the Warsaw administration to a hasty foundation of the special schools of all types; their level, it seems, is not too high. The schedules of these schools are overburdened by ideological topics or, more strictly speaking, by propaganda. There exist two types of the industrial factory schools in Poland:

- 1/ Basic factory school: accepted are young people with 7 classes of the elementary school. The schooling lasts 2 years and its purpose is the education of the youth into qualified workmen.
- 2/ "Technicum": accepted are young people after the 7th class of the elementary school. The schooling lasts 3 to 4 years, and the graduates get the title of a technician.

For the year 1951/52 there were planned 2770 basic factory schools and 1592 "technicums".

Besides these principal schools there exist courses called "the schools of the trade adjustment": accepted is the youth with 4 classes of the elementary schools; the schooling lasts 5 to 11 months, its purpose is the preparation of workmen who learned the trade.

In 1950, in all types of the industrial trade schools there were some 500,000 young people: in 1951 there were 600,000.

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Great stress is laid upon the attracting of the youth to the work: for this purpose, special boarding houses (the Houses of young workers) are established. In the recent numbers of the trade unions' press there appeared many critical articles about the conditions of life in these houses. There is little doubt, that these conditions are still much worse than it was written.

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Compulsion and the labor discipline

The shortage of workers in industry is, undoubtedly, one but not the only one cause of the limitation of the free ~~choice~~ choice and free exchange of the job - similarly as in the USSR.

The freedom of work is in Poland restricted by several legal acts of general character, such as the directives about the compulsory work which authorize to call to compulsory work men of age 18 to 55 and women from 18 to 45, the ^{law}(constitution) of March 7, 1950, prohibiting the fluctuation of the workmen's cadres in trades or sections especially important for the socialised economy, which make_s difficult the change of work; the infamous law of May 19, 1950, about the securing of the socialist labor discipline, directed against the absenteeism. Besides that, the regulations restricting the freedom of choice of the job are included in the various special decrees, such as the law of March 7, 1950, about the planned distribution of the graduates of the secondary special schools and the higher schools, impo-

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sing upon the graduates the duty of work in the factories and punishing the non-obedience of this order by fines and arrest up to 6 months. Along this line are the regulations concerning the physicians and the other workers of the health service, and many other decrees. The description of these decrees and regulations would require a further study.

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Generally, there is a shortage of particular information about the way in which the regulations about the compulsory work are applied. It is, however, known that the regulation prohibiting the fluctuation of cadres makes the workmen suffer very much. And particularly strict is the regulation about the protection of the socialist labor discipline. It is probably not necessary to quote the particular decrees of this law. For its characteristic it is enough to say that the absence without justification in 4 successive days or of 4 workdays in a year, which already earlier was punished by smaller shortening of the wages, are now to be fined by the loss of salary up to 10-25 per cent for three months. This punishment, in circumstances unfavourable for the workman, may be changed to an arrest. Coming late into the work is identical with the absence. In order to secure most impressively the observation of the penal regulations, the law anticipates that the manager of the factory who exculpates a worker's absence not in accordance with truth, or the physician who gives an attestation not in accordance with truth, may be punished by the arrest up to 3 months. The manager

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of the factory is also threatened by a high fine if he failed to inflict the fine to the worker in case when the definition of the fine belongs to him; (i.e., absence or late-coming for less than 3 days). In the first time after the issuance of the law, the press was filled by descriptions of the lawsuits and fines inflicted on the basis of this law. Later on, these reports disappeared from the central press, but it was still possible to find many mentions about the validity of this law in the provincial press. Now, when the provincial press becomes less accessible, it is difficult to make a picture about the frequency of punishments for the violation of the labor discipline.

However, for example the verdict of the Supreme Court of February 23, 1951, No IK 139/51, reported in the "Przeglad Zwiaskowy" No 1 from 1952, gives a proof of the opposition of the workers against this law. The verdict characteristically says: "that the further avoiding of the work of the accused already after the completing of his sentence of arrest after the verdict according to the article 13 of the law from May 19, 1950, about the protection of the socialist labor discipline, due to the avoiding of the same accused of completing of the punishment inflicted by the court on the basis of the art. 8 of the same law, does not constitute the matter of an offence". This verdict could be based on the following facts: The person, called here "the accused", has to be punished for absenteeism at the time described. At the time, it is not allowed to quit

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Despite the job. ~~Existed~~ this evident legal prohibition, that person left the job, and was punished by an arrest for it. After having completed this sentence, the person refused to assume the aforesaid job, and had to be compelled to it. He quickly presented the case at various instances, and before the Supreme Court he gained the case. The court recognised that refusal to assume the job in such circumstances is not an offence. In terrorism and compulsion, in which the Polish population now lives, the behavior of the person called in the verdict "the accused" is an act of great courage.

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The earnings of the workers

It is characteristic that one can hardly find in the official publications the data concerning the wages of the workmen. It is, however, possible to find here and there in the speeches of some dignitaries some figures, but it is not possible to have confidence in them. But we can make thorough enough picture about the level of the earnings from the letters describing the state of rewarding in various parts of the country and from the reports of persons fled to the west. The wages are very low, and this compels the entire family to take part in the earning. Not only the head of the family works, but also the wives, growing up children, and old-age men. Besides this, there is a general phenomenon of extra working, either in the same enterprise, or in other workshops at the so-called private job, in order to satisfy the elementary needs. We do not take into consideration here the high salaries of

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the privileged strata, such as the dignitaries of the administration and of industry, agents of the Security Office, functionaries of the Party, artists serving to the regime. The wages of the rest are extremely low; the wages of workmen in those sections of production that are much stressed by the Warsaw administration are comparatively higher. The relatively highest wages get the miners, smelters, and metallurgists in the heavy industry. Then come the building workmen.

At the end of the ^{PAST}~~Recent~~ year, over 60 % of the miners earned 400 to 600 zl monthly. The average earning of a construction workman is now about 650 zl. The bricklayer gets 800 to 900 zl monthly. A lower functionary of the post office was earning at the end of the year about 300 zl net. Other categories of the workmen and of intellectual workers of lower and medium rank earn 300 to 500 zl monthly. The shock-workers, naturally, earn much more. It is, however, not well possible to make a clear-cut picture of what this concept means: in one place and the same number of "Glos Pracy" one can read a notice that a woman, employed at the transportation, fulfilled 600 % of the norm, and at the same time see a photograph of a shock-worker, a young man, who fulfills 115-125 % of the norm.

Due to the great fluctuation of prices, to the great difference between the official prices and the prices on the black market, to the lack of thorough data about the proportion in which the workman satisfies his needs by goods to official prices or from the black market - it is difficult to

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to state precisely the real value of the wages. It seems 25X1
that the prices of clothes and shoes are 10-times more high
than they were before the war, and the prices of foodstuffs
5- to 8-times higher; it can be said that 6 zl at the present
time equals to 1 zl before the war. It can be stated, without
fear of making a blunder, that the real value of the workmen's
wages together with the family allowances, discussed further,
do not reach 60 per cent of the real value of wages before
the war. This, however, does not include the earning of the
whole family which are probably higher than 60 per cent, since
presently more members of the family are working than before
the war.

The workmen felt that the real value of their wages dropped,
and the defenders of the regime hopelessly face this fact. The
proof of this fact gives an extensive article in the Silesian
"Trybuna Robotnicza" from 24 September 1951, published in the
column "We answer the letters". The anonymous reader writes
that, having earned 9 zl daily, he lived much better before the
war, when he could get for his daily wage 4 kg of sausages,
and the monthly salary sufficed for the first-class outfit at
the tailor. The author of the article can offer as a counter-
demonstration only the deceitful assertion that the miner gave
before the war one fourth to one third of his wage for dwelling,
a doubtful statement about the expenses on education of the
children, the prices of the cinema and theater; in the second
part of the article the author gives the voice to another 25X1

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miner, who describes the hard lot of unemployed workmen before the war.

The comparison of the working-time necessary for the purchase of the goods in Poland and in Great Britain can give some illustration of the real value of the wages. (We utilize the materials published in the report of the European Economic Commission, as far as the prices of the food-stuffs are concerned, and the figures of Lewis Wright, head of the Cotton Workmen Association, as far as the prices of clothes are concerned).

	<u>Poland</u>	<u>G. Britain:</u>
Bread	20 minutes	11 minutes
Potatoes	10 "	7 "
Milk	20 "	16 "
Meat	110 "	84 "
Butter	420 "	75 "
Sugar	110 "	22 "
Poplin shirt	1 week	15 hours
Normal shirt	13,3 hours	5 "
Ready-made man's suit	5 weeks	1,5 week
Ready-made lady's suit	13 "	1,5 week
Gabardine coat	5 "	2 weeks

Quoting this scheme, we must add that the situation in Poland since 1949 considerably deteriorated, and especially the prices of food-stuffs on the black market greatly in-

creased. Another point is that the above scheme was most probably based on the official shop prices, irrespective of the actual prices. Nevertheless, the scheme has a certain value, showing how the situation of the workmen in Poland looks like from the western point of view.

There is no doubt that the low level of workmen's wages in Poland is the result of a deliberate effort of the regime, dictated by the Kremlin. This effort has obviously three aims: making possible of the investments by transfer of the greater portion of the results of work into the capital accumulation; increase of the colonial exploitation of Poland by abatement of the export of industrial products into the Soviet Russia; decrease of the living standard of the Polish workmen on the Soviet level, which is near to the realisation and which represents an indispensable prerequisite of the eventual organic incorporation of Poland into the USSR.

Family allowances

The earnings of persons with the family are complemented by family allowances, paid from the state funds. The family allowances for persons earning under 411 zl monthly are: 57 zl for one child, 123 zl for two children, and 75 zl for every other child per month. The allowances are of 10 % lower at persons earning more than 411 zl monthly. In some cases, small allowances, from 30 to 37,50 zl monthly, should be got for the wife or man unable to work. The reduction of the allowances at

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wages over 411 zl monthly gives the evidence that the government considers such a wage as comparatively high one.

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The right on the family allowance has only he who works in the given enterprise at least three months, and that only in months when he worked at least 20 days. It is characteristic that at the beginning there was not the regulation about the three months of work, and also the number of days to work in a month was smaller. In their present form, both decrees should counteract the alarming fluctuation of cadres, which in its turn is the result of difficult labor conditions. In consequence of these decrees, the workman who changes the job loses by that very fact the family allowances for the time of 4 months. For a workman with 3 children, earning 350 zl monthly, it means the reduction of his income of 40 % (if we add to the wage also the family allowances).

The season workmen, subjected to the decree about the premiums from the extent of work, as well as the workmen at the private farms are not entitled to get the family allowances.

Excessive physical effort

The workmen earn their own modest living, satisfying not even the elementary needs, at the cost of great physical effort. Besides the low wages, there are three causes of this effort: first - high norms: their non-fulfillment causes considerable reduction of the wages. Secondly - labor com-

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petition that takes ever new trickish forms. Thirdly - constant "voluntary" engagements of the workmen to do extra work to increase the productivity, to accelerate the fulfillment of the production plan, etc., assumed at the occasions that are alien to the Polish workman, at anniversaries and other official festival. The Polish workman who - organized in the strong labor unions - was able to defend himself before the war against the negative consequences of the "scientific organisation of labor" understands that all these forms of competition: individual - between single workmen, group competition - between single brigades, collective - between single departments or factories, and section competition - between single sections of labor, follow only one aim and end: the exploitation of the maximum effort of the workman, rewarded in the beginning by premiums, titles, and even orders, and finally, after the raising of the norms, all in vain. Therefore, the workmen offer resistance against these efforts by all means.

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Trade unions

This resistance is, however, extraordinarily difficult, since the workmen have to oppose not only the administration of the enterprise, the state authorities, the Party, but also these organizations that usually represent the basis of the resistance, that is, the trade unions. Contrary to the general opinion, the trade unions in Poland are not mandatory. Their totalitarian character is based on something else: on the

enacted fact namely that in a given branch of industry there may exist only one trade union, completely subordinated to the Central Council of the Trade Unions which, in its turn, is subordinated to the Party. The Party with the Security Office and the administration apparatus of the state is the instrument of the "dictatorship of the proletariat", the object of which is the whole Poland. Independently on these subordinations, the whole apparatus of the trade unions, up to the smallest group in the workshop, is controlled by the respective organisation of the Communist Party. The real purpose of the trade unions, that- according to Wiktor Klosiewicz, the head of the Central Council of the Trade Unions - represent "the transmission of the Party on the toiling masses", is the exploitation of the maximum effort out of the workmen. To this end serves the now propagandized "politicizing" of the masses, organisation of the socialist competition, supporting of the rationalization of work, cultural-enlightenment work connected with the hatred towards all that is connected with the western culture and with the tradition of the free workmen's movement. This does not mean that the trade unions are not interested in the existential problems of the workmen. On the contrary, when the resistance of the workmen increases, we can find in the regime press appeals to care for the basic needs of the workmen. They draw the attention, e.g., to the irregularities in the payment of the wages or premiums, they

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criticize the state of the workmen's mess halls or of their dwelling conditions, topics about the safety measures of the workmen, and the like. But all this does not concern the basic existential problems of the workmen, their wages, their physical extortion. It is very characteristic that in the whole trade unionistic press it is never pointed out to the complaints of the workmen on the excessive labor effort at the competition, harmful to the health. There lacks any information about the opinion of the physicians concerning the high norms. And we know, however, that the state of health of the population, of the working people, is very bad, and that the undernourishment spreads in alarming size. 25X1

The works councils, intended as the independent organs of the workmen's control over the enterprises, sank into the role of the basic groups of the trade unions. Their chief task is the propagation and organization of the labor competition, the struggle against the absenteeism, compulsion of the workmen into the extra work, as it was said above.

Protection of work

Before the war, Poland had the widespread legislation of the protection of work which, in certain items, surpassed the norms valid in the economically advanced countries of the western Europe. In 1932-1933 these regulations were partly restricted. Thus, e.g., the abridgement of the work on Saturdays was abolished, the extra payments for overtime work

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were reduced to the half, the law about the prolongation of the working time in cases of the state need was intended, the sickness allowances were reduced, the workmen's furloughs were shortened of 2 - 3 days.

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Despite that these changes were accompanied by the social insurance law regulating the superannuation insurance of the workmen, the changes caused strong excitement among the workmen. Having this in mind, the Warsaw regime - eager to gain the sympathies of the masses - cancelled these restrictions. Later on, however, the restrictions were enacted again; some of them, such as the regulation about the prolongation of the working time, were re-enacted by the way of legislation, others via facti,

In the later period of the popular democracy and the increased political oppression, the labor protection legislation on many fields was being restricted and drawn back. The regulations were issued concerning the protection of work of women and youngsters and restricting this protection, the apparatus of the social safety was abolished, the insurances in case of professional injuries and diseases were severely restricted; all extra benefits or all higher benefits than the average, struggled out by certain groups of workmen formerly, were withdrawn in the name of the "social justice". It is only the miners and ship-building workmen who now enjoy particular privileges.

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In spite of these changes, on many fields of the protection of work the pre-war regulations are still valid. The single sections of the protection of work in brief outline are as follows:

The eight-hours working day, as well as the six-hours work on Saturday, remains formally in force. But it has no meaning for the protection of strength and health of the workmen, for we know that all they work in Poland much longer. This may be in the same factory, or in extra work or private work, or at various occasions such as the anniversaries, the struggle for peace, and the like. The workmen are compelled to this by low wages, as far as the paid work is concerned, or by actual compulsion, in case of the unpaid extra work. Naturally, it is not possible to find particular data about the real working time cannot be found in official publications. But the refugees report, and we know from the letters, that people work in order to satisfy their primary needs for 12 and more hours daily. This is one of the most striking discrepancies between the letter of the law and the actual state of affairs, the discrepancy characteristic for countries under the totalitarian rule.

The regulations about the work of the women were considerably changed. The most important of the changes is the admittance of the women to jobs harmful for their health, which was forbidden before the war; this all under the pretext of the

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2. equality of rights. This is accompanied by a loud agitation and compulsion, caused by the low level of wages and the difference of wages in the particular branches of the production. Thus, the women not only are allowed to work, but they actually do work in the mines under the surface, in foundries and ship-building yards, in metallurgy, at lifting of the cargo (- and even pregnant women are permitted to do this job).

The women were even permitted to do jobs with substances harmful to the health. The prohibition is obliging only when the substance reaches a certain degree of condensation; this is practically impossible to ascertain. The prohibition of the night work of women was withdrawn. The earlier regulation prohibiting the women's work at the transmissions is not valid. The propaganda aiming at the increase of the factory production of the weaving industry, employing mostly the women, is going on. One must feel uneasy about the state of health of the Polish working women, who - in case they are wives and mothers - are burdened in addition by the household work, so difficult now when there is necessary to struggle for meat, coal, and soap that are scarce on the market.

The protection of work of the juveniles was cancelled by the decree from August 2, 1951, about the work and schooling of the juveniles in the factories; under the pretext of schooling, the youth of 14 years of age is actually per-

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mitted to work (the law from the ~~August~~ July 2, 1924, prohibited the work of juveniles under 16 years of age).

The furloughs of the workmen belong to that sphere where the benefits of the workmen were enlarged. The furloughs after 1 year of work were extended to 8 and then to 12 days (formerly 6 days), after 3 years to 15 days (formerly 12 days). According to a new regulation, the furlough after 10 interrupted years of work the furlough is 1 month. All the time indications, on which the length of the furlough depends, refer to the work in one and the same enterprise. Thus, the furloughs, in the similar manner as the family allowances, become one of the means of attachment of the workmen to one definite factory.

Rest after labor

The great number of health and summer resorts in the Regained regions facilitated in the postwar Poland a social phenomenon, formerly little known; namely the workmen's rests. In 1950 and 1951 about 1 million of persons took the part in them. There exist three kinds of rests: repose rests, lasting 2 weeks; summer rests, lasting 3-4 weeks; and special rests, such as of mothers and children. The management of the rest action is concentrated in a special fund, established at the Central Council of the Trade Unions. The costs of the rests is covered from three sources: by the workman, by the employer,

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and by the State. Each one covers one third of the costs.

But even this useful and for the regime very effective action is not without considerable shortages. The principle that all the workmen are to benefit from the rests is not fully fulfilled. The striking contrast to the proclaimed slogans is the fact that the repose houses and sanatoria are in an excessive degree used by the intellectual workers, especially of the higher industry administration. Over 30 % of persons taking part in the summer rests are intellectual workers; besides this, the enterprises employing predominantly or exclusively the intelligentsia benefit from the rests in much greater proportion than the enterprises with prevalently physical labor. (Thus, during ^{5 months in} May 1950, the employees in the teachers of 124,1 %; workers in culture and art of 121,3 %; finance fulfilled the plan of 147,2 %, whereas the weavers of 47,1 %; the founders of 38,3 %, and the miners of 71,6 %, the metal-workers of 70,8 %.) In the press in autumn 1951 there appeared many criticisms of the conditions in the repose houses, concerning the cleanliness of the houses, their narrow rooms, quality of the food, lack of the organisation of cultural life, excursions, and the like.

Social insurance

The basic skeleton of the prewar organisation of social insurances outlasted not only the German occupation, but also the first years of the regime's rule. The councils,

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appointed by the trade unions, were attached to the existing insurance, but they were deprived of any considerable competence. In 1950, the organisations of social insurance were finally centralised and bureaucratised, separate insurances were cancelled, and so were the insurance funds for particular parts of insurance. The communities and fraternities of the miners were liquidated, and all the money contributions were to be assigned to the institute of the social insurance. The medical care was separated from the social insurance institutions. In 1950 it was assigned to the temporarily existing Institute of the Labor Medicine, which was recently liquidated. Presently, the medical care is being exercised by the apparatus of the State Health Service, centrally organised by the Ministry of Health, and by the national councils. The payment of the sickness allowances is to be done by the factories, and the decision about the allowances is to be taken by the social insurance department of the works councils. The purpose of this reform is to facilitate the policy of restrictions of the contributions, strongly imposed by the CRZZ under the pretext of the struggle with simulation.

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It is not necessary to remark that the independence of the insurance institutions on the employers, and ~~of~~ the binding of the physicians deciding about the inability to work with the insurance company, represented before the war in Poland

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certain guarantee of the real protection of the workmen's health. Now, this guarantee was cancelled. Under these conditions, the raise of the sickness allowance from 60 % of the salary (before the war) to 70 %, and other small formal amendments have no meaning. It is characteristic that the partial payment for the medicaments, that was originally cancelled, was later re-introduced in the same form as in the prewar years. The letters from Poland give the evidence of the shortage of the medicaments, such as penicillin in the quantities that cost here several shillings.

The pensions of the intellectual workers were considerably decreased, right to the level of the workmen's benefits. These were formally raised, but due to the low valorization of the prewar rents, these benefits have no great significance;

The accident allowances were restricted in the comparatively highest degree. According to the Hitlerite and Soviet models, the invalidity rents under 25 % were abolished. The full rent of persons who were victims of an accident before 1945 is 162 zl monthly, a modest sum. It means that a person who, e.g., lost the right hand ^{gets} ~~is~~ about 110 zl monthly, and the person who lost the leg about 80 zl. per month. The rents due to the accidents occurred later on are defined according to the income groups and a special index of wages. The full rent of a worker earning 330 zl monthly is two thirds of the salary; at the incomes from 330 zl to 500 zl - a half of the

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salary. It falls gradually in the proportion to the salary; at salaries over 750 zl the ^{pension} rent is only 40 %. Before the war, the full rent was 66 % of the income of the insured person. The changes in the accident insurance betray most impressively the reckless attitude of the regime toward the weak people.

The miners - saltworkmen, and the workmen in the ship-building yards obtain higher insurance allowances; this according to the Miner's and Shipper's Card.

Conclusions

The workmen in Poland suffer not only from the shortage and the extreme effort and exploitation of the work. Being accustomed to the free atmosphere of the Polish workmen's movement before the war, they suffer from the lack of freedom in the country, of the trade organisation freedom, and of personal liberty. The impact of the state authorities on all the realms of life, such as labor, wages, education of the children, health service, provisions, dwelling, cultural life, fear of ^{political}/persecution, etc., this all causes that all expressions of dissatisfaction have to be concealed. In spite of this, the workmen do resist. This resistance, however, must have quite different forms from those in the free world. An open strike, for example, is out of question, and so are the protest meetings, free discussion in the press, action in the Parliament. Spontaneous, unorganised opposition to the raising of the norms and of other forms of exploitation,

on the whole passive attitude of the workmen at the trade unionistic meetings, summoned to the end of the increase of productivity of work, boycott (as far as possible) of the rationalisers and shock-workers at the elections of trade unions and works councils committees, and above all the great inner solidarity of the workmen against the political and economic pressure - these are some forms of the struggle of the Polish workmen. But there are also successful more glaring expressions of dissatisfaction and anger, such as the strike of miners in the Zaglebie Dabrowskie in the spring 1951.

All what we have said does not mean that the workmen have negative attitude toward all changes. The industrialisation of the country, the social ownership of the means of production in the industry, the prosperity of the building, access to the higher schools to the broad masses, the workmen's rests - these things are considered by the workmen as the lasting achievements of Poland. They deeply hope that all these institutions and arrangements will not serve in the future to the Soviet Russia, but to their own country, not to the dictatorship, but to the free society, not to the Communist elite, but to all working men, and that they will promote their welfare and freedom.